DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 849 SP 029 386

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TITLE Drugs in Sport: An Overview.
INSTITUTION Integrated Research Services, Eugene, OR.
PUB DATE 2 Jun 86
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Athletes; Athletic Coaches; *College Athletics; *Drug Abuse; Drug Education; *Drug Use; Higher Education; Peer Influence; Performance Factors; Prevention; Stress Management; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This literature review addresses the prevalance of drug use and abuse among college athletes and the reasons for such abuse. Among reasons cited are status, peer pressure, boredom, and performance enhancement. Possible interventions that may prevent illegal drug use are also discussed, including educating coaches and trainers to help athletes, teaching athletes to deal with pressures and stress in more positive ways, and educating athletes, coaches, and staff about the dangers of drugs, both legal and illegal. It is recommended that a complex systems approach is needed for early education, prevention, and detection of potential substance abusers. The entire student athletic program must be rehauled, starting with recruitment practices, to avoid the creation of situations where student athletes may be tempted to turn to drug use. (CB)

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DRUGS IN SPORT: AN OVERVIEW

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June 2/1986

SP029386

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DRUGS IN SPORT: AN OVERVIEW

Over the past five years some 17 universities who participate in the NCAA have been put on probation for violations of ethical misconduct. Another 35 schools are being investigated. The author looks at the research, and an overview of print media and editorial comment. The relationship between the the athlete and the institution that supports the mystique of athletic heroes is also explored.

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In a survey of 2000 college athletes from 10 teams at eleven campuses nationwide, 27 percent of the respondents reported using marijuana, 12 % used cocaine, 11% used major pain killers and 82% used alcohol. Preliminary results of of the survey were reported in the New York Times Sports section in March of 1985. The report noted that the sample drawn consisted of one percent of the 250,000 college athletes and was comparable to the same amount of drug use among non-athlete population in the same age group. A most interesting finding in this study noted that 67% of college age Americans drank alcohol whereas 82% of college athletes surveyed used alcohol on a regular basis (Anderson and McKeag, 1985).

In an unrelated study conducted by Dr. Alan Sack of the Center for Athletes Rights and Education, 188 male and female

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The author gratefully acknowleges research support from Ms. Marge Bray, research assistant, Eugene, Oregon.

athletes were surveyed at four Connecticut schools in 1981. 63% of the women and 49% of the men on scholarship said they feared their athletic aid would be withdrawn if they didn't perform to a coach's expectation. 42% of male scholarship athletes reported extreme pressure to take less demanding academic majors; while 48% were encouraged to take "mickey mouse" courses. In a control sample of non-scholarship athletes, the percentages were significantly lower (Sack, 1981).

George Vescey, sports analyst for the New York Times, commented in 1984, "the unethical tactics by coaches and boosters are as dangerous in a social sense as drugs are in a medical sense. College athletics which began as recreation for legitimate students has become a monster that requires full time surveilance, not unlike the dealers of drugs" (N.Y. Times,1984). This commentary was in response to the 107 ethical violations charged by the NCAA to a well-known football power on the east coast. Mr. Vescey continued his analogy when he referred to boosters, fanatical alumni, and good ole boys who encouraged and promoted unethical recruiting and training practices; as not unlike the street pusher who knocked at the locker room door.

The Washington Post recently carried a guest editorial from a former all pro-halfback who made marks on the field as well as being an ivy league graduate. The thrust of the article descibed several substance abuse treatment programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and the Inner Circle.

The first component to understanding drug abuse among athletes according to this athlete-author, is to provide an intervention strategy; thereby making the athlete "aware" of his chemical problem. Once properly diagnosed, and a distinction is made between recreational use and addiction, treatment plans with referrals to in-house counseling centers are made. Once the athlete commits to a treatment program, the long and difficult road to recovery is designed (Washington Post, 1985).

In articulating the cause and effect relationship of professional athletes who opt for chemical addictions, the author notes that the "battle against drug abuse in athletics is one skirmish in a war that ought to be waged against the entire athletic system" (Hill, 1985,).

Many social scientists point to status, peer pressure, boredom, and performance enhancement as the most commonly heard reasons for drug use (Beckett & Cowan, 1979). As more disclosure about misconduct and chemical dependence in the pros is offered, most of us look to the institution of higher learning for some answers (Chronicle of Higher Ed,1982). The scholar-athletes who are heavily recruited, promised a 4 year security blanket with fringe benefits, learns early on that they play by a different set of rules. Social and ethical value systems which are taught and enhanced through high school no longer have any bearing on the athlete-student-super-star. The athlete that is pampered and insulated in college cannot cope with the real

world. Drugs make this transition easier. The athlete super-star who moves into the pros is insulated even further and put on a higher pedestal of hero worship. Drugs make this tranisiton also easier.

In September of 1985, a paradoxical event in sports history was reported in an editorial column of the New York times. After Pete Rose broke the major league hitting record, he embraced his son in front of thousands of baseball fans and re-created the ultimate dream of the all-american athlete. Moments later a star outfielder came to the plate. This athlete had just returned from the courtroom and weeks of testifying aginst himself and another drug dealer in a Pittsburgh trial. In his trial, he articulated the methods of soliciting clients and procedure for making transactions among three major league teams. The editorial concluded with the comment that "spectators must increasingly wonder which fielding lapses, and which strike-outs are the product of snorting cocaine" (NY Times,1985).

The research efforts of several noted social scientists suggest a number of underlying problems that manifest themselves in drug abuse among our NCAA athletes. In the most comprehensive college student athlete survey to date, Anderson, Mckeag, and their research associates at Michigan State University collected data from over 2,048 respondents. With a response rate of 72% from the survey sent to athletes, 10 major research questions were posed in an attempt to document attitudes and experience with

alcohol and drugs. The results which are still being coded and analyzed offer a glimpse of two main substance abuse categories: a-socially related drugs (alcohol,caffeine, cocaine, cigarettes marijuana, hashish, smokeless tobacco,and psychedelics) and b-ergogenic related drugs (ampehetamines, steroids, anti-inflamatories, barbituates/tranquilizers, major pain medications, minor pain medications and viatmins/minerals).

Early findings suggest the following:

1-student athletes use alcohol and drugs more frequently with friends than with teammates.

2-major sources for obtaining illegal drugs are friends, relatives and "other" non-teammate sources.

3-with the exception of cocaine, the majority of student athletes begin their use of alcohol and drugs in high school or before.

4-some coaches and trainers are illegally dispensing ergogenic drugs.

5-the overall use of anabolic steriods is much lower than estimates provided in the popular press.

6-major sources of anabolic steriods are from non-team related sources.

The author cautions that until complete analyses of data is performed including the frequency and amounts of drug usage, the composite picture is not clear (Anderson & Mckeag, 1985).

In related substance abuse reporting among professional athletes, some 50 percent of linemen and linebackers in the NFL use anabolic steroids (Sports Illustrated, 1984). In a series of articles by the Phoenix Gazette and and the Arizona Republic, the widespread use of anabolic steroids was exposed for lack

of formal policy against prescribing the drugs. Since March of 1983, however, a new policy has been set forth to censure any physician wrongly prescibing the medication. According to the Arizona Medical Board specialists who testified at a hearing in 1983, several doctors were sent letters of concern warning them not to prescribe steroids. Dr. Thomas Boyden an endocrinologist at the Univeristy of Arizona, testified that extended steroid use could lead to low sperm counts, liver disorders and other problems. A survey of Arizona doctors found that the steroids do little more than provide a psychological lift, promote water retention, and create serious possility for long-term adverse side effects including cancer (Phoenix Gazette,1981, & Arizona Republic, 1984).

In August of 1983, eight Pan Am athletes lost 21 medals because of detection of steroids during a random urinalysis. Some athletes suggest that steroids in the right dosage can offer a greater capacity for workouts without breaking down the body. According to several medical experts, no study has ever proven the physiological benefit of performance other than psychological effect due to "more bulk and water." According to orthopedic surgeon and former chief medical officer of the Canadian Oympic Team, Dr. Ed Percy, "the drug is dangerous and unsportsmanlike." In response to public testimony by top-ranked international power lifters, Percy and others note the following: a)coaches are overzealous, b)money is a too large a factor in reaping such lucrative financial harvests, and c) athletes are under a lot of pressure to produce. Failure just isn't acceptable in todays society. (Los Angeles Times,1984.) Dr. Steven Van

Pelt of Arizona State claims that parents of high school athletes call regularly to inquire about steroids. Van Pelt cites a classic study where athletes were asked, "if there was a drug that guaranteed you a gold medal, but would kill you within a week after winning would you take it? 50% said they would!!! (Sports Illustrated, 1985)

To get an overview of the seriousness of substance abuse among college athletes, we must look at the system that supports unethical conduct, illegal practice, and perpetuates life threatening behavior. In a recent Arizona investigation, the Republic reported that several top ranked baseball players testified in a grand jury about the unauthorized use of the drug, NARDIL, an MAO inhibitor /antidepressant. During the testimony it was revealed that most players did not understand the need for the drug nor have any notion about its side effects. They were told that "they would feel better and perform well on the field." Some players commented that they did in fact feel better "on the field" and "off the field" and that after losing a game they didn't feel "the traditional let-down." Clinically, the drug has been prescribed for atypical depression for patients with mixed anxiety and depression (PDR, 1986).

Unfortunately, no expalanation was made by the coaching or medical staff to educate the athletes regarding possible side effects. Nardil may cause a hypertensive crisis in some

patients; more importantly it may not be used with foods with high concentration of tyramines such as meat, fish, pickles, liver, cheese, yogurt, beer, wine, and large amounts of caffeine and chocolate. (PDR,1986)

In an interview with athletes and investigators (Ungerleider,1985), no specific warnings or precautions were mentioned by athletic staff before offering Nardil. No athlete was warned of possible addiction or psychological dependence after prolonged use. After an extensive investigation by the medical community and university officials (1984-present), it was determined that an independent physician/consultant had prescibed Nardil over 900 times. (Arizona Republic, 1985) In some cases athletes entered the locker-room and were requested to proceed to the "candy-jar" (a large container full of pills) for their daily dosage. After an initial prescription was filled at the pharmacy, athletes were referred to the "candy-jar" for on-going supplies.

What's important about this case is not the fall-out from the medical community, the suspension and reprimand from the university regents, or sanctions from the NCAA. What's important is the systems failure that is perpetuated by school personnel, athletic trainers and coaches, and university boosters. What are the pressures that are brought to bear on these folks and the performance pressure passed on to the athlete.

According to Dr. Edward Bloustein , president of Rutgers and board member of the American Council on Education and National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges,

"college administrators are out of control and they don't know whether they can out vote their coaches with alumni support in the athletic policy among major universities. Dr. Paul Hardin formerly of SMU and now president of Drew University once turned in SMU to the NCAA for recruiting violations. He commented in the N.Y.Times (March, 1985), "SMU was a trivial matter compared to what is happening now. What is happening now goes to the heart of the educational enterprise."

In a N.Y. Times article in (March, 1985), Neil Amdur articulated several developments which underscored the complex pressures in collegiate athletics which shed some light on the systems failure.

a-in January of 1983, a tennis coach and head track and field coach of a major university in separate incidents committed suicide within a ten day period. The pressure of a new conference league and competition were cited by friends and relatives as factors in both deaths.

b-a new football coach was hired at a major southwest power with an awesome 6 year contract of $1.7 million in money and benefits. The board of Regents commented in response to outside criticism, "higher education is a business and the contract is part of that process."

c-inFebruary of 1984, a former basketball player of an eastern school was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for his part in a point-shaving scheme. The judge commented that every college athlete may now come under suspicion from coaches and fans."

d-track and field athletes at a southwest conference school disclosed publicly that their coach had reneged on scholarship promises, paid for wining performances and enrolled them in cushion classes to insure passing grades and preserve their eligibility.

e-a southeast conference basketball star quit his team in his senior year in protest of being forced to take pain killer drugs while injured.

f-a west coast school with wealthy boosters was charged with assisting athletes in the purchase of stereos, clothes, promissory notes for auto purchase and arranging abortions for team member girl friends.

g-In January of 1984, a major scandal broke in the pac ten conference with charges of multiple substance abuse, recruiting violations, and lesbian relationships between coach and athletes. Resignations followed shortly.

The former president of Ohio State University, Dr. Harold Enarson wrote, "college athletic programs are out of control when the evaluation of academic transcripts is subverted by anyone--powerful friends of the university, coaches, administrators. It is out of control when grades for athletes are falsified on a systematic basis....it is out of control when recruiting of blue-chip athletes involves in some systematic fashion top business, political, and corporate leadership of the community and state (Center Magazine, Jan. 1984).

In a letter to The Black Collegian Magazine, a former basketball star at Maryland said after losing his scholarship for dropping off the team, "when you are being recruited it's a whole different world...its like window shopping, all glamour and bright lights. But once your get in and try the merchandise, its different. Your feel powerless to do anything. The school has locked up all the angles and there is a no-return policy on the merchandise....its like the lamb staring the tiger in the face" (Black Collegian, 84-85).

In personal interviews with Eric Zemper and William Anderson, (Bray and Ungerleider, 1985-86), a number of important issues regarding college athlete substance abuse came into focus. The

most important finding might be that there is multiple substance abuse among all college students. What seems to distort our view is the reporting by the media of the rampant drug use. Interestingly enough, the highest reported drug usage is among football players followed closely by track and field athletes.

Anderson notes that there is no one root cause of the drug abuse problem. "Athletes begin receiving special treatment as early as seventh grade. Their skills are valued by society and as such they are given special attention, grades, and social benefits." "Athletes go through life with a distorted view of their own self-image and self-worth." In the area of prevention, both Zemper and Anderson suggest massive educational programs beginning in the fifth grade. According to their study, over 50% of the athletes using drugs started using before high school. Both researchers agree that testing is the most important prevention and deterrence approach among collegians. Unfortunately testing is expensive and in some cases provides a serious ethical dilemma for team doctors who are treating a potential patient.

Zemper goes one step further and claims that an international drug testing program would curb most substance abuse among athletes. He notes that in Great Britain and Scandinavia random testing in athletes year round is performed, regardless of the location or training schedule of the athlete. Another area of grave concern is the credibility of the medical community. Zemper notes that ambiguities regarding the use of steroids for

altering body mass and strength programs has punched holes in the overall credibility of medical personnel and team physicians. Athletes are learning first hand how dangerous steroid use is with deadly consequences for chronic abusers. The medical community must recover credibility with the young athlete in order to be an effective advocate for healthy sports medicine techniques.

In summary, both NCAA researchers and other academics cited here note that the approach to drug free athletics is not a simple solution. But rather a complex systems approach to early education, prevention, and detection of potential substance abuse candidates. The focus solely on "athlete as winner" may give us clues to a more fundamental flaw in our entire educational system. Aside from usual stresses among college athletes, we must look further at the institutional pressures which dictate widely used performance enhancing drugs. Zemper notes, "I don't feel there is room to try and see who can discover the best set of chemicals to achieve a better performance."

Finally, the recruitment of student athletes should be approached with a well balanced attitude to the emotional and academic maturity of the individual. Allowing university boosters and wealthy alumni to live vicariously through the success of these young recruits is a major disservice to the entire institution. Provisions for assisting athletes in crisis, peer counselors, and classroom coping stragegies should be a part of the stat-card early on.

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